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Cleveland Museum of Art Features Photographs by Zwelethu Mthethwa

CLEVELAND (Jan. 8, 2003) — The Cleveland Museum of Art will feature photographs by South African photographer Zwelethu Mthethwa (born 1960) in a new exhibition that celebrates the spirit of people living in post-apartheid South Africa. **Interior Portraits: Zwelethu Mthethwa Photographs** will open at the Cleveland Museum of Art Feb. 15, 2003, remaining on view through April 23, 2003. Admission is free.

A prominent figure in an emerging group of African artists, Mthethwa has exhibited since the late 1990s in solo and group shows around the world. In both 2000 and 2002, he recorded rural emigrants who had moved in search of work to a rambling settlement in Parrl, about 60 kilometers east of Cape Town. Mthethwa photographed the occupants up close in their shantytown homes whose interior walls were frequently papered floor to ceiling with various signs of consumer culture such as garishly hued magazine ads and commercial posters. These tiny, makeshift spaces were often accented by carefully composed still-life arrangements of the occupants' worldly possessions — common household objects and personal items. His approach was not a candid, documentary style, but a predetermined one where the photographer explained his intentions and then discussed with the sitters what to wear and how to pose. "Mthethwa skillfully combines formal artistic skills with sensitivity to create expressive photographs of the human condition," notes Tom E. Hinson, the museum's curator of photography.

The exhibition includes seven large-scale images (38 x 51 inches) which depict people who have left their traditional, familiar homeland and culture and now reside on the margins of urban life. The photographs reveal a physical place that reflects the personal needs and aspirations of its inhabitants. Their poverty and transience conflicts with the prosperity and stability expressed in the ads for sofas and dining sets that adorn their walls. Despite their living conditions, Mthethwa captures the subjects' obvious pride as they stare intently at the camera.

The Museum receives operating support from the Ohio Arts Council.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is one of America's leading comprehensive museums. Its permanent collection is world renowned for its quality and breadth, spanning 5,000 years. The museum is an important international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and art acquisitions. For more information on the museum, its holdings, programs, services and events, call 1-888-CMA-0033 or visit www.ClevelandArt.org.

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